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ABSTRACT

A 1985 survey of telex use in Thailand revealed that 90 out of 100 companies send and receive between 1 and 50 telexes a day, that telex is used more extensively than any other form of written communication for business, and that there are typical telex styles and formats. Information on business education on the university level reveals that only two state universities offer comprehensive business English courses. The curriculums of these two universities as well as curriculums in the private universities allow for instruction in telex writing. In teaching telex writing, either the limited, usually imported, texts containing references to telex communication or authentic telex messages and guidelines derived from them are used as instructional materials. Emphasis is placed on techniques of precis writing and adaptation of business letter-writing skills. Problems in telex teaching include lack of instructional materials and lack of language standardization, low student writing proficiency, and limited student time to devote to telex writing skills. A number of tables are included and examples of telex communications are appended. (MSE)

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TELEX LANGUAGE IN THAILAND: ITS IMPORTANCE, ITS TEACHING AND THE MATERIALS REQUIRED

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Telex Language in Thailand : Its Importance, Its Teaching and the Materials Required

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Background

Due to the advances in technology in the last decade, telecommunications have begun to play an increasingly important part in the business world. A telex is a form of written communication that is in extensive use today as it can replace any kind of letter in an effective and more efficient manner. A telex message is a simultaneous form of communication, being picked up by the recipient at the same time as it is sent. This serves the needs of businessmen who compete for business across countries or even continents. Unlike the telegram, it is convenient for both the sender and the recipient, especially since most business companies own a teleprinter or telex-machine. Moreover, a telex is accepted as a legal document in the same way as a letter.

According to a survey of 160 companies on Business English used in Thai Business Community conducted in 1982 - 1983 by Bang-Orn Savangvarorose, the telex is used in this country to a considerable

degree, in fact more than any other form of written communication. Nowadays telex writing is included in the curricula of Business English writing courses in Thai Universities because its popularity and importance in the business world is well recognized.

The Role of Telexes in Thailand.

A teleprinter was first installed in Thailand 20 years ago, in 1965, at the Post and Telegraph Department. The telex has gained increasing popularity since the Thai government decided to encourage both foreign investment in Thailand and the export of Thai merchandise in the Fifth Development Plan beginning in 1981.

The following are the results of a survey, conducted in January 1985, of telexes in Thailand. The presentation will be divided into 3 parts:

1. The use of telexes in 100 of the biggest Thai companies.

2. The study of authentic telexes from 100 companies in Thailand.

3. The study of telexes taught at Thai Universities including the instructors' and students' points of view.

I. THE USE OF TELEXES IN 100 OF THE BIGGEST THAI COMPANIES.

One hundred companies were randomly selected from a piece of research entitled "600 Biggest Companies in Thailand" conducted by a group of lecturers from the Faculty of Commerce and Accountancy at Thammasart University from 1977-1980.

A Questionnaire was sent to 100 companies and the findings arranged in tabular form are as follows.

Table 1. Companies Possessing a Teleprinter Machine (s)

Number of teleprinters	Frequency (Number of companies)	Percentage
1	63	63
2	21	21
3	8	8
4	4	4
6	3	3
21	1	1
Total	100	100

From Table 1, it can be seen that 63 companies out of 100 own one teleprinter each, 21 companies own 2, and 8 companies own 4 or more than 4. Bangkok Bank Limited owns 21 teleprinters.

Table 2. The Number of Telexes sent & Received per Day.

Number of telexes per day	Number of companies	Percentage
1 - 5	21	21
6 - 10	25	25
11 - 20	18	18
21 - 30	7	7
31 - 40	9	9
41 - 50	10	10
51 - 60	2	2
61 - 70	-	-
71 - 80	-	-
81 - 90	1	1
91 - 100	2	2
101 - 200	3	3
201 - 300	1	1
500	1	1

From Table 2, it can be seen that 90 companies out of 100 send and receive between 1 and 50 telexes a day. This indicates the importance of telexes for the Thai business community.

Table 3. Different Purposes in Writing Telexes for Business Communications

	$\bar{X}$	S.D	V
*1. Requests and Inquiries	3.51	1.40	39.78
2. Replies to Requests and Inquiries	2.97	1.34	45.26
3. Orders	3.52	1.40	39.66
4. Replies to Orders	2.75	1.40	50.74
5. Claims	1.99	1.15	57.80
6. Adjustments	1.45	0.78	54.02
7. Requests for Credit	2.63	1.45	55.29
8. Replies to Requests for Credit	2.22	1.28	57.83
9. Requests for Credit Information	1.82	1.16	63.63
10. Replies to Request for Credit Information	2.01	1.25	62.25
11. Collections	1.80	1.08	60.14
12. Thanks	2.71	1.13	41.73
13. Congratulations	2.35	1.10	47.00
14. Condolences	2.07	0.91	44.10
15. Making Appointments	2.83	1.12	39.56
16. Giving Information	3.41	1.26	37.07
17. Quotations	3.03	1.43	47.25
18. Others	1.83	1.50	82.22

From Table 3, it can be seen that now the telex serves a function parallel to that of a business letter. They are used to a considerable degree for orders, requests and inquiries. They are used only moderately for giving information, quotations and replies to requests and inquiries, making appointments, replies to orders and thanks. It can thus be concluded that telexes assume the role of business letters.

*The above list was drawn up as a parallel to the main functions of business letters as laid out in a variety of Business English textbooks.

Sources of Knowledge

From the survey, it was found that 35.25% of telex writers learned how to write telexes at educational institutes while 49.58% learned from their colleagues and 15.15% from text books. Seventy eight percent of businessmen think that personnel in business companies should have a fundamental knowledge of writing telexes; 20%, however, think that this is not an essential skill. Eighty-eight percent of businessmen think that telex writing should be taught at educational institutes, whereas 12% think this is not necessary.

II. THE STUDY OF AUTHENTIC TELEXES FROM 100 COMPANIES IN THAILAND.

A total of 89 authentic telexes were received from as many companies: the remaining 11 companies merely sent a few sample sentences and gave a few examples of the kind of abbreviations used.

One outstanding characteristic of the telex is that every word is written in capital letters. The other findings are as follows.

1. The Heading and the Closing of Telexes

1.1 From the study of 89 telexes from 89 companies, the headings read as follows.

Table 4. Word (s) Used to Head Telexes

Word (s) used	Frequency	Percentage
1. ATTENTION*	45	50.56
2. TO	10	11.24
3. TO FROM	8	8.99
4. FROM	2	2.25
5. TO FOR	2	2.25
6. FOR	1	1.12
7. TO FROM DATE	2	2.25
8. FROM TO SUBJECT	1	1.12
9. -	16	12.98
10. DEAR SIR,	1	1.12
11. DEAR + NAME	1	1.12
Total	89	100

From Table 4, it can be seen that 50.56% of telexes in Thailand begin with an "ATTENTION" line, 8.99% begin with "TO", 17.98% do not address the recipient, and only a few percent use a salutation as one would in a letter.

*See Appendix

1.2 The Closing of Telexes

Table 5. Word (s) Used to Close Telexes

Word (s) used	Frequency	Percentage
*1. REGARDS	42	47.19
2. BEST REGARDS	20	22.47
3. THANKS AND REGARDS	6	6.74
4. THANKS	3	3.37
5. -	17	19.10
6. SINCERELY	1	1.12
Total	89	100

From Table 5, it can be seen that 47.19% of telexes in Thailand end with "REGARDS", 22.47% end with "BEST REGARDS", 19.10% have no closing, and only 1.12% use "SINCERELY" as a complimentary close. It can be assumed that "REGARDS" is the most common form of complimentary close used in telexes.

*See Appendix

2. Characteristics of Telex Messages Studied from 100 Business Companies.

2.1 Lexical Characteristics

2.1.1 Words used in telexes are simple, short, familiar and conversational and are often the same as are used in business letters. For example, words that show courtesy are "please" or "thanks", while the word "favor" is not found at all, and "appreciate" is rarely found.

2.1.2 Abbreviations are common in telexes. Brevity is important as the cost of sending a telex has to be borne in mind, Most of the telexes studied contain a range of abbreviations, but at least the abbreviation of the phrase "referring to your telex" (RYT) and abbreviations for the words "thanks" (TKS), please (PLS), "regards" (RGDS), "and" (N), and "your" (YR) are used in almost all telexes.

Eighty-two companies out of a hundred have their own lists of abbreviations.

Out of 318 abbreviations given by a hundred companies, those that occur with a frequency higher than 10 are as follows:

1.	ADV	(advise)	20
2.	CFM	(confirm)	32
3.	DD	(dated)	11
4.	HV	(have)	15
5.	L	(letter)	13
6.	N	(and)	14
7.	PLS	(please)	62
8.	RCVD	(received)	10
9.	RE	(referring to)	11
10.	RGDS	(regards)	39
11.	TKS	(thanks)	31
12.	TLX	(telex)	34
13.	U	(you)	27
14.	V	(we)	12
15.	YR	(your)	33

Any other words occur with a frequency less than 10. It can be assumed that these 14 abbreviations at least are in common use in the Thai Business Community.

2.1.3 In writing figures, there is one outstanding characteristic, that of writing the number zero, which is written with a slash through it (Ø).

2.2 Grammatical Characteristics

The majority of telexes which were studied were concerned primarily with brevity. Short words, abbreviations were employed and the number of words used kept to a minimum. As regards the reduction in the number of words, it was found that certain structural words that are not necessary to the content are often omitted.

2.2.1 If the subject of a sentence is the first person personal pronoun "I" or "We", these are often omitted. For example.

(We are) PLS TO MEET AND DISCUSS WITH YOU IN BANGKOK OFFICE

2.2.2 Articles which will not cause any misunderstanding when omitted are left out. For example:

PLS ENSURE (that a) COPY (of the) DOCUMENTS ARE SENT WITH (the) CONSIGNMENT

2.2.3 Prepositions which are not important to the content are omitted. For example:

PLS PHONE ME (at) 5854632 (on) TUESDAY 12 BKK TIME (between) 7:00 - 8:00.

2.2.4 Punctuation marks are not considered very important in telex writing and consequently are not used to a very great degree.

2.2.5 The verb "to be" in the passive voice is often omitted. Moreover, the passive voice is found to be reduced to the past participle if it is used in a subordinate clause. For example:

TLX US FLIGHT DETAILS WHEN (they are) SHIPPED

2.3 Discourse Pattern

2.3.1 Telex Language is concise and contains no repetitions or irrelevant information, which is also an essential characteristic of a good business letter. Moreover, the language used is straightforward. Introductory phrases such as, "I would like to inform you that ....." or "This is to advise you that ....." are not used in telex language.

2.3.2 Transitional words are not used much in telexes. If a telex message is long, it is divided into short paragraphs to avoid confusion and at the same time to facilitate understanding. Simple transitional words like "and" or "because" are by far the most commonly used. From the study of 89 telexes from as many companies, it was found that "and" was used to express addition, "because" was used to express cause and result.

2.4 The Paragraph

Telex messages are always ahort. If they are long, they are divided into short paragraphs of about 1-3 sentences. Moreover, some companies number the paragraph (1, 2, 3 .....) whereas some list each paragraph alphabetically (AAA, BBB, CCC .....). This will help the reader's comprehension.

III. THE TEACHING OF TELEXES IN THAILAND AND THE MATERIALS USED.

In Thailand there are 13 state universities and 3 private universities. Four of the state universities offer courses in Business English, but of these courses, one is for teachers of Business Communications only, while yet another is a very short introductory course which follows the Bell Crest Series of Great Britain. It can thus be said that only two state universities offer truly comprehensive Business English courses. The curricula of these two state universities allows for instruction in telex writing. Private universities, which are in close touch with the business community, most certainly include telex writing in their Business English writing courses.

The Materials Used on Teaching Telex Writing.

Since there are only a few text-books which mention telexes at all, instructors have to depend primarily on authentic telexes from business companies.

As for the material used at Chulalongkorn University, we collect authentic telexes from business companies and select only those which are well-written, that is, those which are brief and concise, contain suitable examples of common abbreviations, and the reduction of words in which the text has been reduced in some way, and the language used is straightforward and simple. Then we try to set up a number of rules or guidelines from the study of those telexes.

As at Chulalongkorn University, the 3 private universities likewise depend primarily on authentic telexes.

Given the lack of suitable materials in Thailand we need to import text-books from overseas which deal at length with the subject of telex writing in a practical fashion.

Telex Teaching

At Chulalongkorn University, the aim of teaching telex writing is to present authentic well-written messages as examples. Instructors explain to the students what a telex is, and what the important points in telex writing are, namely that the message must be clear, concise and easily understood, not just brief. Then, students practise decoding and encoding telexes.

Another method is to utilize precis because a telex involves brevity. Students practise drafting telexes from business letters. Guidelines to writing together with some common abbreviations are taught through text analysis. The teaching of telexes takes only two hours out of a total of 42 hours taken up by the whole business writing course. However, students have an opportunity for self-study and practice through the exercises provided.

Telexes are taught after students have mastered different forms of business letters since these forms are the basis of business communication. Moreover, students should first possess the necessary

writing skills, since for the sake of brevity, they should know how to reduce clauses and shorten sentences into phrases without losing the correct meaning.

As for other universities, the teaching is almost the same, that is students learn by means of authentic telexes and practice. Students have to expand and reduce messages along with learning some abbreviations, although not too much emphasis is placed on the latter.

From a survey of 20 instructors of Business English and 143 students of 5 institutes, namely: Chulalongkorn, the Graduate Institute of Business Administration of Chulalongkorn, The University of the Thai Chamber of Commerce, Thammasat and Durakitbandit, it was found that all instructors agree that telex-writing should be included in Business English Writing courses since it is becoming increasingly essential to the business community. Moreover, some instructors even think that it should be an optional advanced course for business students in the near future.

As for the 143 students, it was found that 85.31% felt they needed telex teaching while 14.69% did not think it was necessary to teach it at university. Those who wanted to study telexes thought that if they knew how to write telexes correctly and precisely, they would work more efficiently, and it would help them conduct their business more effectively. Those who did not want to study telexes thought that they could learn by themselves while working and if they could write business letters, then they could also write telexes.

The Problems in Telex Teaching.

Instructors

1. Since there is no international text available, this leads to uncertainty as to which style is the most acceptable and instructors have to rely upon authentic messages, which vary widely in style. Consequently, this may lessen their confidence in teaching the subject. It is, however, possible to provide teachers with a number of guidelines to follow as laid down in Part II, item 2 of this analysis. (cf. pp.9-12)

2. As one instructor has to be responsible for about 30 students per group, it is difficult for him or her to correct students' papers more than once a week.

Students

1. The majority of students are not proficient in writing. They have hardly even mastered the basics of the language. It is a great problem for them to practise the reduction of clauses or phrases because this may have an adverse effect on their writing skills.

2. Students do not have sufficient opportunity to develop their telex-writing skill, mainly due to the time constraints of the curriculum. Students have but a limited time to study the many different forms of business communications.

Conclusions

As was revealed in the surveys, telex language plays an essential part in the Thai business community. Both instructors and students of Business English also realize its importance, since a telex can be an appropriate substitute for any kind of business letter in the competitive business world.

Telex writing is included in intensive business writing courses in universities in Thailand. Since there are only a few text books available on telexes, the instructors of each university prepare their own materisls which are based primarily on the study of authentic telexes. However, we still need more text-bocks from overseas to use as reference materials.

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APPENDIX

Authentic telexes

Example 1

72251 SIAMENT TH

28/11/1982

TO: SCT LSA 696335

SCC-129/TR/82

ATTN : KHUN PREECHA

1) RE : BLEACH SACK KRAFT

TKS FOR YR ATTN DLVRY PROBLEM HV BEEN SOLVED, CANNOT ACCEPT YR OFFER. WILL CONTACT YOU AGAIN FOR NEXT ENQUIRY.

2) CALCIUM ALUMINATE CEMENT

YR PRC ARE 53% AND 31% HIGHER THAN THE LOWEST OFFER WE HV DECIDED TO BUY FROM.

RGDS

DUANG/PROCUREMENT DEPT MGR

SIAMENT

Example 2

BKK GA

0230221930.88

81171 UNICARB TH

OCT 31 1217 023036

221930 UCCE UR

BAN 1014 OCTOBER 31, 1984

TO : E M COLLINS - UCC, DANBURY

CC : R RAMASWAMI - SGP

A C AUNARIO - MAN

PLS SEND NEW SPECS N CATALOGS OF DEWARS TO UCTHAI.

TKS N RGDS

ARAYA V.

= BANO12

NNNN

LLLLL

1218 000.7

Example 3

BKK GA

0412164994++

87359 BOONWAN TH

JAN 11 1708 052035

2164994 INCO D

87359 BOONWAN TH

TO : INTERCABLE VERLAG GMBH

FM : BOON WAN CO., LTD.

REF OUR TLX DD 22/9/84 WE DIDN'T RCVD 1982 AND 1983 TLX DIRECTORYS

PLS SEND YR TLX DIRECTORYS TO US SO WE WL PAY U FR USD 670.00

2164994 INCO DMMMMM

1710 000.8

Example 4

BKK GA

087 39900++

87358 TDIBKOK TH

JAN 08 1529 041110

CORMSI RS39900

87358 TDIBKOK TH

8/1/85

REF 85/010

TO N CORMAN

YR CS-2772 OF TODAY, PLSD TO MEET MR HAN FAASE AT OUR OFFICE AT 9 AM. HOTEL RESERVATION AT DUSIT THANI MADE ACCORDINGLY.

RGDS

SAW

THAI DAIRY IND

CORMSI RS39900

87358 TDIBKOK TH

MMMMM

1529 000.8

Example 5

TELEX OUT # 113

31/002 TORC 066

BKK GA sent on 10/1/85 time: 15.29 hrs.

08724530++

82695 TORC TH

JAN 10 1529 040414

CGOBANK RS24530

FROM THE THAI OIL REFINERY CO., LTD., BANGKOK

TO FIRST NATIONAL BANK SINGAPORE

ATTN: MR. BHARAT

REF TORCHO/113 10/1/85

PLS TO CONFIRM THE APPOINTMENT ON JAN 23RD AT 9:30 P.M. AS SUGGESTED.

REGARDS

JAN TULAY

+

NNNNN+

CGOBANK RS24530

82695 TORC TH.....

1530 000.9

HAPPY NEW YEAR

Example 6

82927 ALKEMAL TH

BKK OCT 03 0948

RE : COMPANY CHRISTMAS CARDS.

DEAR SIR,

THIS IS 'KATS PERSONAL GREETING'S SERVICE BANGKOK'

WE OFFER OVER 400 DESIGNS OF CHRISTMAS CARD FOR YOUR COMPANY THIS YEAR WITH OR WITHOUT PERSONAL IMPRINT. KATS CHRISTMAS CARD HAVE LOCAL ACCENT WITH IMPORT CARD QUALITY - A PERFECT GOODWILL CARRIER TO YOUR CLIENT OR SUPPLIERS. THEY EVEN SERVE 'AS REMINDER' OF YOUR BUSINESS ACTIVITIES. PRICE STARTS FROM 5 BAHT OR 21 CENT WITH FREE IMPRINTING ON ENVELOPE.

CALL 2341635-6, 2339439 KHUN KLUAIMAI TODAY FOR SAMPLE AND FREE MOMO DIARY 85. OUR TLX 87612 OR 82042

YOURS SINCERELY,

KATS PG SERVICE BANGKOK.

++

82927 ALKEMAL TH

82042 NARADA THMMMM